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THE NAVY AND SUB-LIMITED CONFLICTS (U)

FINAL REPORT

BSR 1407

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A-28

Show of Force Operations

During the past decade the U.S. Navy has been involved in over forty incidents which may be classified as a show of force. Of these, ten cases as well as one involving only the United Kingdom Navy have been selected for analysis:

Jordan, 1957
Laos, 1959
Panama, 1960
Guatemala/Nicaragua, 1960
Kuwait, 1961
Dominican Republic, 1961
Berlin, 1961
Thailand, 1962
Laos, 1963
Haiti, 1963
Cyprus, 1964

In five of these incidents, including the Kuwait operations of the United Kingdom, Naval forces were deployed in response to requests for assistance. In the remaining six, the United States acted unilaterally. It is noted that half of the unilateral operations took place in the Caribbean and that while the primary objective of the deployment in each case was stabilization of the area the naval forces were also responsible for the protection, and if necessary, evacuation of United States and other foreign nationals.

Ten of the incidents were either Communist-inspired or included the participation of Communist-inspired parties or Communist agitators and agents to promote continuing unrest. Only one case clearly involved internal conflict without involvement of outside parties. In all cases the size of the force employed (see Table A-3) appeared to be related to the availability of forces in the area and the seriousness of the perceived situation rather than the original cause of the incident.

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Berlin, 1961

Conflict Origins. The Berlin question dates back to the post war arrangements for four-power control of Berlin and the divided status of Germany. The exposed position of West Berlin inside East Germany and the limited access to this city from West Germany have provided the Soviets with a convenient point to apply pressure on the West. In 1948 the land access routes were closed in an attempt to force a change in status of Berlin. The Western powers maintained their control over West Berlin by keeping access to the city open with a massive airlift effort. In 1958-59 the Soviets again attempted to force a change in the status of Berlin, but the Western resolve and apparent readiness to fight over Berlin led to repeated qualification and eventual disregard of the original Soviet ultimatums. This crisis reached a peak of U.S. Navy involvement in May of 1959 when Sixth Fleet units were alerted and redeployed to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea with portions of the strike force aircraft on deck ready for launching in case of war over Berlin.¹⁹

Crisis Development. The Soviet Union repeated the pressure on Berlin in early 1961 with threats to make a separate peace treaty with East Germany. This was coupled to a gradual transfer of control over access to Berlin from the Soviets to the East Germans in order to force Western recognition of East Germany. The Soviets threatened nuclear war if the West should attempt to use force or violate East German territory in their efforts to counter the restrictions imposed. Soviet Premier Khruschev stated that any attempt at repeating a Berlin airlift would be shot down. Amid the growing tension and nuclear threats, the refugee flow from East Germany into West Berlin increased from 2,600 per week in February to 3,000 per day in August.²⁰ This loss of trained manpower aggravated an East German labor crisis and to halt this loss on 12 August 107 of 120 Berlin border crossing points were closed and strict controls exercised by the East Germans at those remaining open. Barbed wire barricades were erected and construction of the Berlin Wall¹ was begun a few days later. On 15 August three East

¹⁹ Commander in Chief, Northeast Atlantic and Mediterranean, Report of Operations and Conditions of Command, 1 January 1959 to 31 December 1959 (U), 24 February 1960, (SECRET)

²⁰ Commander United States European Command, Annual Historical Report, 1961, (U) (TOP SECRET)

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German Divisions deployed around Berlin. Following these Soviet-East German actions and a message from Berlin Mayor Brandt to President Kennedy stating that he would welcome a demonstrative strengthening of the U.S. garrison in Berlin, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued an order on 18 August, for a reinforced battle group to move into Berlin by 20 August. In the weeks that followed various probes of Soviet reactions were carried out in Berlin to assert Western rights. These probes and counteractions included confrontations of Soviet and United States tanks, harassment of United States aircraft in the air corridors, and street demonstrations by the West Berliners. The incidents continued at a gradually decreasing level throughout the remainder of 1961 and much of 1962. By May 1962 the situation had stabilized sufficiently for the personal representative of President Kennedy, General Lucius Clay, to leave Berlin for the United States.

U. S. Naval Operations. Along with the call up of reservists by President Kennedy, the Navy activated 13 Naval Reserve Training ASW vessels, 6 ASW carrier aircraft squadrons, and 1 land based patrol squadron until 1 August 1962. In November 1961, an anti-submarine task group was deployed to the North-east Atlantic for possible employment in the harassing of Soviet naval operations as a counter to Soviet harassment in Berlin.²¹ This group was relieved in February 1962 by a second group that remained in the area until May 1962. Some operations were carried out in the Baltic Sea with West German Navy units, however, there is no evidence that these operations were directly related to or had any influence on the Berlin crisis. Fleet exercise CHECKMATE carried out by the Sixth Fleet coincided with the Berlin crisis allowing the desired degree of readiness to be achieved without changes in deployment.

Outcome. Berlin continues to be an issue in Soviet-United States relations. Although the threatened separate Soviet-East German peace treaty has not yet become a reality, the continued special status of Berlin and the divided Germany remain as the primary impediments to the achievement of Soviet-United States accord in Europe.

²¹ Commander in Chief U. S. Naval Forces, Europe, Annual Historical Report, Fiscal Year 1962 (U), 13 August 1962, (SECRET)

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